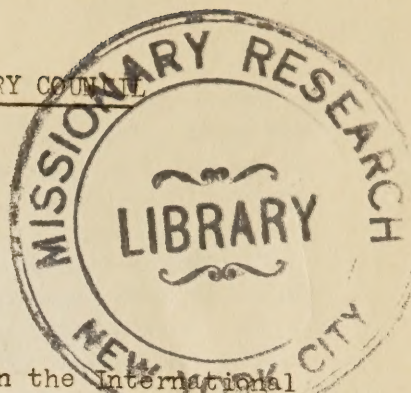


RESEARCH IN THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

By J. Merle Davis PART II



How the Department of Social and Economic Research and Counsel was Founded.

The emergence of a Department of Research in the International Missionary Council is due to several converging influences, which focussed at the World Missionary Conference held in Jerusalem in April, 1928. These influences arose both from within and without the missionary movement. From many fields came reports of the growing impact of modern economic and social forces upon the constituencies of the Younger Churches. Such developments as heavy industry in mines, factories, and plantations, the world-wide influence of the cinema, the spread of narcotics, child labor, congested urban housing, the liquor trade, the rapid urbanization of rural populations, commercialized vice, all formed a complex of formidable problems which were increasing obstacles to the growth of the Church. Important factors in the decision to open the Department were (a) the impact of many of these influences upon every foreign missionary field; (b) the recognition that a new and specialized approach to these problems was needed; (c) the impracticability for each foreign missionary board to study the problems separately; and (d) the obvious advantages of centralizing research so that its results might be made available to all.

Two lay delegates to the Jerusalem meeting gave strong support to the proposal to set up a research department. The first was Professor R.H.Tawney, the well-known economist of the London School of Economics. Deeply interested in the progress of Christian missions, Mr.Tawney urged the need of research as a guide to modern missions in shaping their strategy and program.

Additional support to the proposal for a research department came from the League of Nations. Mr. Harold Grimshaw, Director of the Native Labor Section of the International Labor Office, placed the influence and responsibility of missions into a world context at the Jerusalem meeting by showing their intimate connection with such problems as forced labor, slavery, the liquor traffic, disintegration of tribal life, problems of indirect rule and the application of mandates to native territories. Mr.Grimshaw stated that the League of Nations recognized the strategic position of missions and would welcome the help which they might render in these fields. He urged that a Department of Social and Industrial Research and Counsel for the whole foreign missionary movement be set up, and because of the presence in Geneva of the League of Nations, the International Labor Office, and many other international societies, suggested that city as a suitable location.

The discussion of the proposal that missions should undertake social and industrial studies met with opposition at Jerusalem from many of the delegates from the European churches. However, it was supported by a majority of the British and North American delegates and the representatives of many of the younger churches.

It was not however until the meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council held in Williamstown, Massachusetts, during July 1929, that the decision to open a department of research was taken. The department was set up in Geneva in September, 1930, under the direction of J. Merle Davis and with a German, Dr. Otto Iserland, as associate director. The office continued in Geneva until February 1935, when it was moved to Edinburgh House, London. In the autumn of 1936, the office was transferred to Shanghai, and in March 1938 was again moved to Nagpur, India, for work in preparation for the World Conference in Madras. In March 1939, the department office was opened at 156 Fifth Avenue where its headquarters have continued until the present.

The Work of the Department:

Evaluation of its Output and Usefulness

During its four and one-half years in Geneva, with a staff of two directors and three assistants, the department was able to attempt an ambitious program. Mr. Davis devoted his time to two large field projects in Africa and to making contacts among the British and Continental mission boards and with the various sections of the League of Nations. Dr. Iserland developed a quarterly bulletin service and made special studies of opium, mandates and child labor and these studies and bulletins were posted to a world-wide missionary mailing list. During this period, the nucleus of a working library was built up and a clipping service from a periodical list of fifty covers was begun.

Commission to the Copper Belt In response to requests from several of the British missionary societies, the Commission to the Copper Belt of the Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia, financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, was organized and carried out during 1931 and 1932. One result of this study of the industrialized African was the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment of East Africa, a two and one-half year project, also financed by the Carnegie Corporation, and by the British Foreign Office and the Governments of Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda.

The Report of the Commission to the Copper Belt, published by Macmillan of London under the title, "Modern Industry and the African" has had a considerable influence upon British Colonial and missionary policy. The book was officially placed in the compulsory reading course of all candidates for the British Colonial Service. Based upon its recommendations, a "United Mission to the Copper Belt" of Northern Rhodesia was formed by action of seven British missionary societies which pooled their interests in this highly specialized field and each appointed a staff member whose experience fitted him for work in an industrialized area. For seven years a "United Church of the Copper Belt" has been serving the missions in this industrial area in central Africa where previously the mining companies had declined to deal with missions separately.

Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment The influence of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment has been much more indirect and must be evaluated on a wider stage. The results in stimulating the use of educational films for Africans was considerable, but the central producing and directing cinema council which was planned to follow the experimental stage of the project was never organized. However, the Educational Committee of the India National Congress, has taken the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment as its model and upon it has shaped a visual educational project for the depressed classes of the Central and United Provinces of

India. The report of the Bantu Cinema Experiment - "The African and the Cinema" - has been widely circulated and read among British Colonial governments.

The Government of Jamaica has modelled an adult visual educational program upon this African project and the Governments of Trinidad and other West Indian British possessions have studied the system. The Commission to the Andean Indians is recommending the use of the system of Bantu Educational films for the illiterate Indian population of the Andean highlands.

Madras The needs of the World Conference at Madras carried the department
World to Asia and thrust it into the heart of some of the most vital
Conference problems of the Younger Churches. Its task was to make studies
 and gather data in preparation for the fourth general topic of the
 Conference, "The Church and its Environment." Single-handed and
 with very slender funds at his disposal, the director enlisted the
help of the Christian colleges and universities of China and India. Under the
direction of faculty members, twenty-one college studies for the most part in
India, upon various aspects of the economic and social environments of the
Christian communities, were completed; eighteen of these studies were published
and became the source material from which the director wrote his report to the
Madras Conference entitled, "The Economic and Social Environment of the Younger
Churches." The data collected in these studies together with others made in
Japan, Korea, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies was used as the discussion
material of round tables of sections XII and XIII of the Conference, viz.,
"The Economic Basis of the Church" and "The Church and the Changing Social Order."
Much of this material was edited by the director as the fifth volume in the
Madras Series.

It is only fair to the evaluation of the Department's work to mention the
statements of the secretaries of several of the leading missionary societies of
Great Britain to the effect that the summary of the preparatory studies for the
Madras Conference embodied in the volume, "The Economic and Social Environment
of the Younger Churches" is used by them as a guide for charting the economic
development of the church on their mission fields. A similar endorsement has
come from a few of the North American board leaders.

Latin In the last four years the department has concentrated upon field studies
American of the churches in seven Latin American and four West Indian area
and West countries. Reports have been published upon the economic and social
Indian problems of the Evangelical Churches of Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay,
Studies Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Trinidad; the last-named study
 covered only the work of the East Indian Mission of the United Church of
 Canada and that of the British Methodist Mission and these two reports
 were issued in mimeographed editions. A somewhat different type of
study of the Population Problem of the Island of Barbados was made for the
Carnegie Corporation of New York and was financed by that Foundation. This is
not the time or place to attempt an evaluation of this last group of studies
beyond stating that on the whole they have been favorably received.

During 1943, the director served upon the Commission of five men which,
under the auspices of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, made a
comprehensive survey of the Indians of the Andean highlands of Ecuador, Peru, and
Bolivia. The joint report of this Commission is now in preparation.

Department Financing The financing of the Department during its first eight years was carried entirely by the two men who more than all others visualized its possible significance and were responsible for its inception - Dr. John R. Mott and Dr. William Paton. The cost of the larger African and West Indian British field projects has been met by generous grants, totalling \$84,300.00 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and smaller grants from the Phelps Stokes Fund and various British Colonial Governments.

Since the removal of the Department's office to North America, the director has been personally responsible for raising one-third of the annual current budget of \$7,000. However, his quota, together with a large part of Dr. Mott's quota of support, has been increasingly contributed by those North American mission boards in whose fields studies have been made by the Department. The mission boards have also contributed to the cost of all the Latin American and West Indian Church studies and have helped to finance the printing of the reports.

Objectives, Philosophy, and Methods

The objective of the department's research in relation to the missionary movement is to put the leaders of the movement both at home and in the field, so far as possible, in possession of all the facts which bear upon a given problem of the churches and to interpret the facts accurately, objectively, comprehensively, so that they may serve as a basis for the forming of sound judgments and for building a strategy commensurate with the magnitude of the task.

From the first the department has recognized that under its limitations of staff and budget and the purposes for which it was created, its function was not that of pure or primary research. The vastness of the geographical areas which its studies have covered, no less than the complexity and immense scope of the economic and social problems which create the environment of the younger churches, have made primary research out of the question.

Principles and Methods The department has evolved certain principles and methods in its planning and philosophy of action. The method of its research is to try to gather all the facts which pertain to a problem of the missionary movement, to study these facts first apart from the missionary objective and then in their every possible bearing upon the problem of the Church. Next to break down the problem into its component parts and relate these parts to the aforesaid facts, to study the relation of one to the other, and finally, to reconstruct and interpret the problem in the light of the reassembled facts.

Field Study Procedure The first step in approaching a field study is the attempt to understand the general economic and social framework or stage upon which the life of a group of national churches is carried on; the forces, trends, and conditions which form the environment of the churches and condition their growth. This requires as thorough acquaintance as is possible with extant economic and social studies of the areas and the problems to be considered. The second step is the field study of the economic and social patterns of the particular area with the attempt to check the accuracy or adequacy of the picture which has been built up in advance by first-

hand examination and by reference to national sources of information. Third, the analysis through many case studies of local churches and interviews with many nationals, of the apparent and actual economic and social position and problems of the constituencies of the churches. Fourth, the reconciling of the results thus secured with the general and local economic and social frames of reference constructed in the first two steps indicated. Finally, the rearrangement of the elements of the picture of the church which has been built up so that it may be adjusted to the frame of reference to which it is referred.

The two other research principles are those of cooperation and stimulation of research in the mission field. The single-handed position of the director has compelled him to devise types of cooperation which would secure a volume of data and experience and cover a geographical scope impossible of compassing alone. By this principle the studies of the China and India colleges were organized. The services of more than twenty higher academic institutions were enlisted and upwards of one hundred individuals under trained faculty leadership participated in the fact-finding process.

The questionnaire as an instrument for gathering data and opinion has been used in six different countries and hundreds of pastors, educators, and missionaries have in this way assisted in supplying data.

The group discussion method has brought together other hundreds of native pastors, missionaries, and laymen and has been found extremely useful in checking on the results of individual interviews and the director's personal observations.

The assignment to selected people of ^{the preparation of} memoranda on special subjects beyond the competence of the director adequately to deal with alone has been a method which has yielded excellent results.

The "findings conference" in which all the pastors and missionaries of a single denomination in a district or in a small country have been called together to criticize conclusions as related to the churches of the denomination has been of great value in several instances.

A final task preparatory to the writing of a report, is that of weighing and sifting the mass of evidence, data, opinion and hearsay which has been gathered in the course of a field survey, checking it against other sources of information and drawing the findings and recommendations from this sifted material.

Integrating Research Findings with Missions Program	An additional step and one in which the director is increasingly concerned is entirely outside of the field of research and yet it is an inescapable part of the department's responsibility. It is to devise various means of introducing the implications and findings of the report into the thinking and eventually into the policy and program making of the mission boards and the national churches. This is a most difficult and delicate process for such integration requires not only the cooperation of mission board executives and missionaries which in many cases has been most generously accorded, but also the acceptance of the new policies by the leaders and members of the younger churches who have inherited or have been trained under different philosophies of procedure.
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New and Old Factors to be Considered in the World Situation

The world war now in its fifth year is bringing Christian missions face to face with the necessity of reorienting and rebuilding the enterprise. In many of the lands of the younger churches few of the old landmarks will remain by which the new course may be charted. It is next to useless to attempt to predict what lies ahead, but we may be sure of one thing and that is, change. Enterprises based upon imperialism, capitalism, paternalism and assumptions of superiority and right to control are certain to be rudely awakened and to find the foundations on which they have built are undermined, if not swept away. Foreign missions based upon the fairly stable political, economic, and racial social philosophies of the last one hundred years will see most of these philosophies and the systems which they have created challenged, if not repudiated, by the peoples of the lands of the younger churches. This war has permanently shattered the prestige of the White Man and acceptance of the theory of the superiority of the White Race except in those spheres where force prevails.

What bearing will such a world situation have upon foreign missions? In a recent paper on "Outstanding Issues That Missionaries Must Face" Mr. Charles H. Fahs has asked three leading questions which probe to the heart of our subject.

1. At the close of World War II what will ^{be} the conditions existing in the various fields where before this war Protestant mission work was in process? What bearing will these conditions have on the renewal, and the continuance of mission work in these areas?
2. What will be the conditions existing in so-called home-base lands? What bearing will these home-base conditions have on the support and furtherance of mission work abroad?
3. What new factors in the world situation are likely markedly to affect the nature, the outreach, the program, the methods, the personnel, and possibly even the more immediate objectives, of the missionary enterprise as it may then be carried on? When, where, and how are these new factors likely to become operative?

In these questions, Mr. Fahs has voiced the growing concern of all forward-looking mission boards and National Christian Councils for they reveal a situation in mission lands that is unique in history. We are dealing here with the problem primarily as it is related to the function of research. There are three or four aspects of the problem which we will mention:

The limitations of the previous experience of missions as a basis for estimating the events and needs of the immediate future and for drawing an adequate strategy.

Strange new elements are being dropped into national test tubes which are bound completely to upset the customary reactions with which missions are familiar. (Examples: Japan, China, India, South East Asia)

The situation on many of the mission fields is so obscure and is changing so rapidly that the home boards can only dimly construct a picture of the present

situation facing their churches and cannot be expected to foresee what lies ahead.

Missions by and large are approaching the greatest crisis of their history without the research instrument within the movement for helping to interpret the changed and changing conditions.

At the close of hostilities on some mission fields, the pressure to reconstruct the movement along the old lines with the aid of great sums of foreign money will be immediate and almost overwhelming. The boards and national Christian leaders will be suddenly confronted with the necessity of making major and far-reaching decisions on the basis of inadequate information, under great emotional stress, and with the blue prints of the former structure prominently in mind.

Under these circumstances, a moratorium on reconstruction is needed during a considerable period, pending the most painstaking examination of all the factors:- an examination conducted jointly by representatives of the foreign mission boards and national church leaders.

However, such a preliminary field inquiry into the factors which will constitute the new foundation upon which missions are to be rebuilt is but the first step in the research task of the enterprise. If the younger churches are to keep up with and adjust themselves to the rapidly moving political, economic, social and ideological changes taking place in their nations, it can only be done through assigning to a few selected leaders the task of constant study of these matters, together with their bearing upon the Christian enterprise. It is difficult to see how a National Christian Council or a great foreign mission board dares to face the unknown future without provision for such continuing research in the very heart of the enterprise as an accompaniment and guide to the new programs to be undertaken.

In line with every international secular organization the missionary movement is rightly stressing the need of post-war reconstruction but as with the secular agencies, it must be planning the processes and creating the instruments to be used in this short interim period between the old age and the new, and in advance of the cessation of hostilities.

In this connection, it is obvious that there are at least not a few returned missionaries from all the major fields who are equipped for special lines of research and who might be enlisted in a task of this kind.

Out of the ruin left by the war, we may confidently predict that certain old guide posts will remain to point the way for the reconstructed church. Among these is the fact of the predominantly rural basis of the life of most of the peoples of mission lands. War has destroyed many of the cities of these countries; it cannot destroy the earth nor its life-giving power. This vast reservoir of sustenance will be waiting for the exiled peoples, and will in the last instance again provide the means of livelihood and life to the nations. Missions in the new age must recognize the dominant and beneficent power of the earth as a universal and basic foundation for rebuilding and extending the Christian movement. The principles and guidance which for thirteen years has been provided by the research and leadership of the Agricultural Rural Fellowship must be taken as a trunk road guide post and used in a more statesmanlike manner by the North American missionary boards if they are not to miss the highway which leads into the new age of missions.

Another familiar guide for the post-war era which this Department has been constructing points toward a stronger economic base for the younger churches and a more Spartan-like philosophy in their founding and nurture by the mission boards. How this principle can be reconciled with the prostrate economic condition to which the war has brought hundreds of the churches is a problem which will tax the wisdom and challenge the courage and self-control of all concerned.

A third guide for the new era is that embodied in the comprehensive Parish Program. This program deals with life as a unity and the rehabilitation of the whole person, the home, and the community as the goal of the Church. The comprehensive approach is peculiarly fitted to minister to a countryside ravaged by war, but is also seen working at its best under normal conditions of peace.

A final guide to an enriching missionary service in the post-war period is that provided by social anthropology. Here is found a key to the understanding of the inner life of peoples, their hidden tribunals of judgment, their main-springs of action, the sources of their values and prejudices - in short, why they act as they do.

The early missionary has had to acquire these insights through long years of the "trial and error" method, insights difficult to pass on to his successors. The missionary of the New Age must go to the field already equipped by an acquaintance with anthropology so as quickly to detect and use these hidden assets of the people so that they may be enlisted in the service of the Church.

The Future of the Department

The department has scarcely more than touched the fringe of the basic issues of the missionary movement. Its studies have dealt with but two or three of the major concerns of the younger churches and the mission boards. Following the example of every great secular enterprise, the missionary enterprise at its very heart needs the research function to help chart its course and plan its strategy. If it is impracticable for every missionary society to maintain its own research staff, it surely must be possible for every national association or conference of missionary societies to have its fact-finding and fact-weighting bureau, adequately staffed and financed for serving the whole group of societies.

Questions for Discussion The immediate purpose of calling together this group of advisers is to secure counsel upon two or three major issues which are facing the department. In the absence of any interim meeting of the International Missionary Council during the last five years, and with the conclusion of the program of Latin American and West Indian studies which was committed to the department at Madras, the director is in need of help in charting his course in the years immediately ahead:

- (a) What are the topical and geographical areas in which the department can next most helpfully serve the whole missionary enterprise?
- (b) What are the criteria for evaluating proposals from missionary bodies for departmental assistance? How may decisions as to further work best be reached? What standards should be used for determining priorities of proposed projects? *

* Recent suggestions and requests from different fields for Department assistance: (see page 9)

- (c) Are there possible areas other than the economic aspects of the younger churches to which the Department should now address itself? What considerations should be kept in mind in determining such other possible emphases?
- (d) A final and vital question has to do with the personnel and leadership of the department. The director looks forward to but a few more years of administering this work. He feels that within that period he should be able to round out the program which he has started and thus help prepare the way for a new director. There are two or three aspects of this transition from old to new leadership which I would ask you to consider:

Possible New Emphases	If possible, the new incumbent should have a different equipment and be prepared to lead in a different emphasis from that which has marked the first twelve years of department activity, i.e., the economic. There is a growing conviction with much evidence from many mission fields to support it that a social-anthropological emphasis in the missionary approach would markedly strengthen the Church.
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After ten or twelve years of emphasis upon the economic environment of the younger churches and their adjustment to it, we question whether the ensuing period might not with great advantage specialize in the more subtle field of inherited cultures, social and conduct patterns, and the sources of motivations and values. There is accumulating evidence that if these things were better known and if the missionary were more aware of why peoples act as they do, many obstacles to the progress of the Church would be removed.

An Inter- national Organization	The department is essentially an international project. During its first four and a half years it was, with reason, located in an international city in the heart of western Europe and was led by an international staff. The fact that a European and a German Lutheran was a co-director of the organization proved a powerful means of enlisting the cooperation of those same European missionary societies who at the outset had opposed the opening of the department and so gave to them a feeling of ownership in the project. After the resignation of Dr. Iserland in 1935, not only was the national and confessional link with many of the Continental Churches broken, but the information
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- * (a) From the National Missionary Council of New Zealand a request that the Director assist by studies of the churches of the area in preparing for the proposed South Pacific Area Christian Conference which is planned for early 1945;
 - (b) A suggestion received from officers of a prominent British missionary society with large interests in West Africa, that the director assist with studies of the economic and social problems of the churches of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone;
 - (c) A suggestion received from the secretary of the National Christian Council of India that the assistance of the director in stimulating research among the colleges and churches of India would be welcomed.

service of the department was discontinued and it has never been resumed. Since 1935, the American director has carried on alone while more and more the department's work has become peripatetic in character and has been devoted almost entirely to field surveys.

Department The last years have called increasingly for the supplementing of
Functions this field visitation and study with interpretative work,
relating the results of field study to the thinking of the mission
boards and national churches. A small beginning in these matters
has been made but such activities should be extended if the work
of the department is to make an appreciable impact upon the leaders and institu-
tions which are shaping mission policy and are preparing the missionary for the
New Age. As seen by the director, there are two functions that must be covered
by the department if it is to be continued into the New Age: On the one hand,
field surveys and contacts with the younger church leaders and missionaries, and
on the other, the interpretation and implementation of the principles which emerge
from such surveys to those bodies in the sending lands who are charting the
course of missions and training the missionaries. These two tasks cannot be
carried effectively by one man.

The time has come when an associate director should be secured for the
department, and I would like to suggest that the new officer be selected from
one of the constituent British National Councils of the International Missionary
Council. The appointment should be made with the understanding that the appointee
would become the director of the department upon the retirement of the present
incumbent. There would be obvious strength in planning for a period in which
the two directors could work together and thus have a chance to demonstrate the
effectiveness of the enlarged program.

To the inevitable question, "How will the enlarged budget which such
an appointment would create be financed?" one of our British friends, who most
fortunately is with us today, has suggested that the British missionary boards
might be willing to consider assuming this financial responsibility,

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